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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ___

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

(Agenda item 4)

1. The Commission considered item 4 of its agenda at its 476th and 477th meetings on 27 and 28 February. It had before it the report of the Task Force on National Accounts (E/CN.3/1995/3). A draft paper proposing an approach to be used by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat (UNSTAT) and the regional commissions in the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA) was presented to the Commission as a background document.

2. The Commission expressed its thanks for the report submitted by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA), in particular the four elements of the support system provided in section II of the report of the Task Force, and took note of the consolidated presentation of ISWGNA activities contained in table 1 of the report. Noting the magnitude of this undertaking and the scarce resources, both human and financial, that were available, the Commission reaffirmed that a high priority must be assigned to this undertaking. For that reason, implementation of the 1993 SNA will continue to require the close attention of the Commission over the coming years.

3. The Commission confirmed that implementation was essentially the responsibility of individual countries and would need to proceed in accordance with their own priorities. In that regard, a need was seen for the less statistically developed countries to concentrate upon the development of basic statistics. The availability of the 1993 SNA in all the official languages of the United Nations and of the relevant manuals and handbooks was essential for that purpose, as was the provision of technical assistance and training. It was acknowledged that the regional commissions would have to play a key role in the process. It was also noted that each international organization would adopt a different approach to facilitating and supporting national implementation.

4. Concern was expressed by some members, who indicated that the report did not adequately address a number of specific requests made by the Statistical Commission at its special session in April 1994. In particular, some members requested a further elaboration of criteria for measuring progress and assessing the needs and availability of resources so as to establish a strategy with an explicit time-frame for implementation of the 1993 SNA. It was pointed out that the recent series of regional and other workshops and seminars organized by ISWGNA members was helping countries to understand the work involved in implementing the 1993 SNA and thus to formulate their own national plans and strategies, including needs for technical assistance.

Action taken by the Commission

5. The Commission:

(a) Requested ISWGNA to meet the request made by the Statistical Commission at its special session in 1994 for a strategy paper to be drawn up on the implementation of the 1993 SNA, defining criteria against which progress could be judged. The paper should build on the draft paper already prepared by UNSTAT and on country responses to the new SNA questionnaire;

(b) Agreed that the tables included in the new SNA questionnaire should define the target framework for the implementation of the 1993 SNA. As those tables could also be approximately identified in the current SNA questionnaire, both questionnaires could be used as a check-list for monitoring the implementation. That would enable the regional commissions to define sub-targets for different groups of countries, according to their national accounts development. A regional pilot project approach could be used by the regional commissions to respond to the needs of these subregional groups of countries;

(c) Reiterated that the regional commissions had a key role to play in promoting and monitoring implementation;

(d) Emphasized that implementation of the 1993 SNA demanded paying close attention to the development of basic economic statistics in a systematic manner;

(e) Endorsed the programme of further conceptual and practical research recommended by ISWGNA and asked that special attention be given to the needs of the developing countries, including taking account of the informal sector;

(f) Recommended strengthening the capabilities of the regional commissions, and noted the need for mobilization of bilateral and multilateral resources, both at the global and regional levels, in recognition of the fact that organizational support for implementation depended critically on the availability of human and financial resources. In particular, the Commission requested a consolidated, country-by-country report of the needs for assistance and financing. In that context, it reiterated the need for training to expand the technical resource base for SNA implementation and for technical assistance. It noted with appreciation the offer of some countries to expand their support for the implementation of the 1993 SNA by providing technical and financial resources;

(g) Reiterated the urgent need to make the 1993 SNA available in all official languages of the United Nations and to complete the programme of handbooks as quickly as possible.

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Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter _____

MEASURING AND MONITORING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(Agenda item 12)

1. The Commission considered item 12 of its agenda at its 477th meeting, on 28 February 1995. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the profile of poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean (E/CN.3/1995/19);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Central Statistical Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the implications for statistics of the World Summit for Social Development (E/CN.3/1995/20).

The Commission heard an oral report on the work of the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty made by the representative of the World Bank.

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Action taken by the Commission

2. After a wide-ranging discussion covering, inter alia, various approaches to measuring poverty and the difficulty of identifying and recommending international poverty concepts, the Commission:

(a) Decided the report of the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty should be considered by the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination at its eighteenth session. The Working Group should recommend to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session what further work, if any, should be undertaken in this field by the international statistical agencies and the Statistical Commission. In preparing its recommendations, the Working Group should take into account the regional experience and results on poverty measurement prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1995/19), wide diversity of national and regional experience and circumstances;

(b) Stressed that the global statistical system should welcome and be prepared to respond effectively to the requirements for statistics on social issues emerging from the World Summit for Social Development;

(c) Broadly supported the technical proposals contained in paragraph 9 of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1995/20) as a basis for further work in this field, and agreed that a small expert group should be convened by the Statistical Division to report to the Commission's Working Group at its eighteenth session on how this work should be continued. If possible, the expert group should meet in conjunction with the Siena Group in June;

(d) Agreed that the expert group should also consider the feasibility of developing appropriate indicators in several specific fields of immediate policy concern.

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Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ____

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS

(Agenda item 11)

1. The Commission considered item 11 of the agenda at its 478th meeting, on 28 February 1995. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1995/17).

2. Under this item, the Commission considered the progress in implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems, and the establishment of the Demographic and Social Statistics Database (DSSD) and the human settlement statistics database. The treatment of refugee statistics in the system of international migration statistics was discussed. The need for revision of the present human settlements questionnaire was stressed. The view was also expressed that information on the national, legal and administrative frameworks for civil registration should be compiled.

3. The Commission commended the work of the Statistical Division and expressed its appreciation to the co-sponsors of the International Programme, particularly the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for its financial support. Several countries offered to provide assistance to the International Programme.

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Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the continued implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems, particularly training workshops on civil registration and vital statistics, and efforts aimed at the economies in transition;

(b) Encouraged the further development of demographic, social and human settlement statistics databases and their speedier availability on the Internet and on CD-ROM;

(c) Supported current work on the revision of United Nations recommendations on international migration statistics, particularly the review of definitions and treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees;

(d) Endorsed the joint Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat/Habitat work leading to the publication of the Compendium of Human Settlement Statistics in time for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in June 1996.

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Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ___

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS

(Agenda item 11)

1. The Commission considered item 11 of its agenda at its 478th meeting, on 28 February 1995. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the 1990 and 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programmes (E/CN.3/1995/18).

2. Population and housing censuses put heavy demands on the statistical and administrative resources of a country and require thorough preparations well in advance of the actual census-taking. Concern was expressed at the rising cost of censuses and demands were made for such tools as sampling and other techniques for reducing the costs of future censuses. The need to meet user requirements in planning and producing census products both for the country as a whole and for its subdivisions was emphasized, and the discussion also covered the usefulness of the Geographical Information System (GIS) and PopMap in censuses; the relation of population censuses to other censuses, e.g., agricultural censuses; and the need for new manuals, such as a manual on classifications. The regional commissions reported on their planned census activities.

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3. The representative of Ghana introduced a draft resolution entitled "2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme", for consideration by the Commission. Many representatives spoke in support of the draft resolution and endorsed it.

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the proposed preparations for the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme;

(b) Approved the preparation and timely dissemination of handbooks on census methods and training materials, and the preparation of the planned workshops;

(c) Endorsed the convening of an expert group on the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme to consider, inter alia, concepts and definitions of families and households, recommendations on housing censuses, and the exploitation of census data, such as migration and gender-specific information;

(d) Stressed the importance of undertaking technical cooperation activities in collaboration with the regional commissions, the specialized agencies and national statistical offices;

(e) Emphasized the application of GIS/PopMap techniques and facilities for disseminating provisional census data in an on-line environment.

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Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ___

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS

(Agenda item 11)

Gender statistics

1. The Commission considered gender statistics under item 11 of its agenda at its 478th meeting, on 28 February 1995. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1995/17/Add.1, paras. 1-6).

Action taken by the Commission

The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the work of the Statistical Division on gender statistics, including the progress made in the preparation of the second issue of The World's Women: Trends and Statistics for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held at Beijing in September 1995, and noted the value of this work for national work as well;

(b) Agreed that the field of statistics on women should comprise comprehensive statistics on women and men, so that "gender statistics" was a more appropriate general title for this field than "statistics on women";

(c) Encouraged the use of the analytical, user-oriented approach found in The World's Women: Trends and Statistics in other social fields;

(d) Agreed that its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination should consider preparing a list of gender-related topics of broad national and international interest which might be covered in national publications on a rotating annual basis;

(e) Emphasized the value of time-use statistics for a range of national and international socio-economic statistics, including gender statistics, and requested that a draft classification of time-use activities be prepared by the Statistical Division as a basis for further research and special studies.

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Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ____

PRICE STATISTICS

1. The Commission considered agenda item 8 at the 479th and 480th meetings, on 1 March 1995. It had before it the progress report of the Task Force on Price Statistics including the International Comparison Programme (ICP) (E/CN.3/1995/7) and background documents, entitled "Basic terms of reference of the six Task Forces" and "Current status of the International Comparison Programme", prepared by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat. The representative of the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), as the convener of the Task Force on Price Statistics, introduced the report of the Task Force.

2. The Commission noted that the Task Force was in the stage of conducting initial studies; a questionnaire was sent out to obtain information from the concerned agencies.

3. Members of the Commission expressed the view that the Task Force should not alter or expand its mandate to include other areas of price statistics. It was stressed that the Task Force should focus on activities determined in its terms of reference relating to the harmonization of consumer price indices (CPI)-related work.

4. The Commission emphasized the importance of the active participation of the regional commissions in the work of the Task Force. The Commission felt that even if the representation of the regional commissions at task force meetings could not be secured, their continued involvement by means of frequent communication, information and documentation exchange, using mail, telephone and electronic media contacts, was desirable.

5. The Commission noted that the situation that had brought forth the issue of hiring an independent consultant for the evaluation of the ICP had changed. It welcomed the active cooperation of the Statistical Division, the regional commissions and various international agencies, as well as national statistical offices, to promote, in a harmonized manner, the implementation of regional and global comparisons, and full-scale and reduced information surveys, and to explore the use of purchasing power parities for aggregation.

Action taken by the Commission

6. The Commission:

(a) Requested the Task force to carry out the fact-finding activities envisaged in its programme of work and focus on those aspects of the CPI harmonization issue that were manageable within the given time-frame and resources;

(b) Encouraged the improvement of alternative communication techniques and the involvement of the regional commissions in the Task Force's activities;

(c) Requested the Task Force to submit a progress report on its work to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination at its forthcoming session.

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Rapporteur: Ms. Chris DENELL (Sweden)

Chapter ___

SERVICE STATISTICS

Draft proposal for a workshop on the domestic (within country) service sector in developing countries

1. The Commission considered agenda item 9 at the 480th meeting on 1 March 1995. It had before it the note by the Secretary-General on the draft proposal for a workshop on the domestic (within country) service sector in developing countries (E/CN.3/1995/14).

2. The Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat outlined preparations for organizing, in conjunction with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), a workshop for a selected number of African countries to study the problem of the methodology and collection of data on the service sector in the domestic economy. This would be done with the help of two consultants who would visit countries, outline the dimensions of the problem, and write a report that would be a resource for the workshop. The output of the workshop would be a revised report, providing guidance on implementation to the countries and on follow-up to ECA.

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Action taken by the Commission

3. The Commission endorsed the plans of the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with ECA, for the organization of a workshop on service statistics in the domestic sector and looked forward to the programme.